



HARTWORKS

Winter 2005 • \$5

FEATURING GUEST AUTHORS

ROMANI ARMAH, GABRIELLE MARTIN & JAMES SAUNDERS

The Charles Hart Middle School Literary Magazine

Cherish Gaines



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Cover, l-r: Nichell Kee, Marché Shields, Maryum Abdullah

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to *hArtworks*, the nation's only inner-city public middle school literary magazine, written and edited by the students of Charles Hart Middle School. *hArtworks* is published through a collaborative effort between the school and the D.C. Creative Writing Workshop, an independent non-profit working to create a literary renaissance in Southeast Washington. Now in its sixth year, *hArtworks* gives our young writers the opportunity to exercise their creative energies, speak their minds, and be heard by an audience throughout the city. The 2006 edition of *Poet's Market* recognizes *hArtworks* as "an outstanding example of what a literary journal can be (for anyone of any age)."

This year we welcome two new writers, Bomani Armah, who joins veterans Ruby McCann, Nancy Schwalb and Jamila Wade as senior writers-in-residence, and our first junior writer-in-residence, James Saunders, a 15 year old sophomore at Ballou Senior High.

We have many friends who have helped to make *hArtworks* possible, and we would like to express our gratitude to them. Our sincerest thanks go out to the Herb Block Foundation, Morris and Gwendolyn Cafritz Foundation, Children's Fund of Metropolitan Washington, Commonweal Foundation, Community Foundation of the National Capital Region, D.C. Children and Youth Investment Trust Corporation, Fannie Mae Foundation, John Edward Fowler Foundation, Philip Graham Fund, Harman Family Foundation, Hitachi Foundation, International Monetary Fund, Junior League of Washington, Moran Family Fund, Meyer Foundation, Rotary Club of Washington, Wachovia Foundation, Wendling Foundation, Weissberg Foundation, the friends and family of Anna Su, Michael Joy and TSCJoy/Monterey, LLC, Sarah Booth and Bloomberg L.P., Wells Fargo Home Mortgage, Karibu Books, Free Hand Press, the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, the Arena Stage, the Shakespeare Theatre, McGuire Associates, Joyce Page and Ms. Printing, Tollefson & Gustini Investment Management, our friends at Popeye's on Malcolm X Avenue, Ms. Shin's 6th grade class at Bush Hill Elementary School, Gregory Auger, George and Lenore Cohen, Fritz Edler, Tom and Carolyn Grey, Mark Hollinger and Kathy McNeil Hollinger, Frances Horn, Betsy Karel, Gay and Charlie Lord, Paul Mandelbaum, Nicholas Polt, Judene Slaughter, Cherie Swiss, Raina Rose Tagle, friends of the late Meyer Saul Taubman, Juanita Wade, Vera M. White, and Martin Youmans.

Special thanks for the hard work and dedication of the D.C. Creative Writing Workshop Board of Directors: Dr. Susan Gerson, Bernie Horn, Kathleen Huston, Joan Kennan, Bill Newlin, Nancy Schwalb, Kirsten Tollefson, and Jamila Wade.

We would also like to thank the following administrators, teachers, and staff who are our partners in this endeavor: Principal Willie Bennett; Assistant Principals Yvonne Davis and Shelton Wilson; Ms. Randa Alhegelan, Ms. Catavia Buck, Ms. Gloria Fergusson, Ms. Carolyn Jackson, Mr. Jarvis Massenberg, Ms. Gina McKinney; Ms. Megan Merklinger; Ms. Eleanor Seale, Ms. Pamela McKinney, Ms. Ann Brogioli, and Ms. Maevern Williams.

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The Mystery

My gaze is sometimes fearful,
because of all the violence going on.
I can't sleep at night--shooting going on.
I like my family, that's all I love
but all the violence is sending them above
to a place they should not be.

The secret is that they hate each other
because they are from different neighborhoods.

I'm glad that Rosa Parks and Dr. King took a stand for us black people
so that we could have freedom,
but some people don't appreciate that we are free.
The world wasn't made for us to desire and imagine:
You need to focus and get an education

To love is mystery.

Markela Izlar

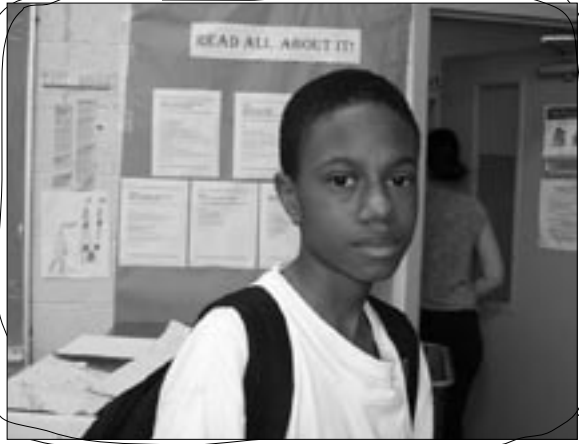


Life as a Game

My gaze sees life as a game
And you have to play it right.
It is my custom never to take
Direction and hang with the wrong crowd.
I am very good at playing sports and
Keeping up the honor roll report card;
I am capable of being one of the smartest kids in America.

I believe in the saying "What goes around comes around."
The world wasn't made for killing
and other unnecessary violence.
If I speak of the world, it's not that I don't enjoy it.
To love is to work forward,
To get what you love if you don't already have it.

Franzel Willoby



Markus Johnson

Transparent

My gaze is fresh, pure, and new
Like a brand new day
And a new sunset
I desire the right to worship
I'm a window
(I don't exist)
I am transparent
I am soul and sky

Shambriel Metts

My Philosophy

My gaze is always offensive, because I'm not scared of anything or anyone
and if I have to be offensive just to prove that, then I will.

It is my custom to be very silly, because I think
being silly at the right time is fun
It is not a secret to anyone who knows me.

And I'm very good at double-dutch because I play it every day
and it overwhelms me just to play double-dutch
It is a good sport and it keeps me active.

I'm capable of doing anything I put my mind to,
and I worship whatever I'm capable of doing
one hundred percent.

I believe in myself forever and always
because if I don't think big, then I won't be big
The world wasn't made to be destroyed, but to be put together.

I speak of myself and only me
because when I speak of myself then I will be free
I'm on a mission, I'm on the rise
so to all you ignoramuses, you better recognize.

Regina Abraham

Don't Let Go

My gaze is thunder, like lightning striking a tree,
like a hot boil of water hitting an egg for the first time,
immediately turning it into a boiled egg.
It's my custom to be courteous and nice, and greet everyone I meet.
I'm capable of being me.

I believe in freedom and compassion,
I believe in self control, and self respect,
and I believe in you, too.

The world wasn't made for us to hate each other;
the world was made for us to get along and share.
If I speak of anger, it's not because I'm mad,
but if I speak of anger it means that I'm sad.
To love is structure that you hold onto,
and if you let it go, it would let go of you.

Jasmine Murray

I Live in an Apartment

I live in a house that is clean
and shakes when me and my brother jump
The door is noisy, it makes a squeaking noises
and when I go down the stairs
I hear squeaking and cracking noise
Sometimes my dead heart is broken in parts
and my house is made of bricks.
It is red, my windows are glass,
but when they are broken, I see skeletons in my windows,
and when I saw my cousin, he was in a coffin.
I cried and cried my tears out
but I hope he is safe in heaven.
We have a secret together
but my memory has come back to him.

Rakeeah Thompson

My House

I live happily and go somewhere
and my house is as still as a brick;
Open the door and you see the hall
that echoes when you talk.

Happy-hearted, this house was built
by human hands and the bricks are inside
You find bricks that really hurt.
This house is still standing, and still
the door won't stay fixed
Knock and enter happily—
Your shadow is following you
Come closer and see this beautiful place.

Rise and you will see that you will make a lovely day.
In a corner with mercy covering me,
my life is a fortune, like yours

Danielle Blake



l-r: James Tindle, Aaron Brooks

Duration of Childhood

The blood reflects on my wall from a dead cat.
The person inside me is very crazy.
I burn so deep down inside that it makes my head spin.
When I try to think about things that make me happy
all it does is give me invisible tears.
On Halloween night, I cover myself with blood and flour;
I scare little children and make them run home.

Renita Williams

Everything Is Possible

I live in secret and go anywhere that is cool
Some people have dead hearts
but mine is rigid and still going
Mystery is like fortune; it comes at you any time
My tenant is safe in my house
and in its vastness I am strong and smart
My eyes are like broken beams that will never be fixed
My coffin will be cold and dark and everyone will miss me
But to me, everything is possible

Terry Bennett

My Name

Myself: my name smells like new growing trees in a forest
My name sounds like a very small beginning and a very loud end
If you were to taste my name, you would taste
a romantic evening on the grass after sunset
You could see my name on a billboard chart or an open business
and you could feel my name
like a soft body just getting out of a warm bath

Shamia House

I Believe

My gaze is clear like a glass of cold water
And it is my custom to drink it.
I have freedom and intelligence to go along with it,
And I'm very good at knowing
When to do this and not do that.
I know I'm one in a million that's
Going to make it.
I'm capable of changing my life, and also the world
I believe in myself.

Kiauna Hamilton

To love

My gaze is thunder
It is my custom to bite my nails
And I'm very good at keeping a secret
I'm capable of being silent
I believe in hidden windows
The world wasn't made to be unattainable, and
If I speak of freedom, it's not because we didn't have it
To love is shades of green

Ashley Stevenson

Secrets

My gaze is secret, it's mine to keep forever
It is my custom to keep secrets
I have the key to lock them all away
or unlock them should I choose
Secrets, I mean,
Secrets are my specialty and I know many
but I won't tell you
They're locked away forever

Nichell Kee



l-r: Nichell Kee, Marché Shields

Hail My Name

My name means truth, meaning what I say it true
It means you better believe me or else you'll perish
I'm mighty, meaning I fought every terrible monster there is
My face is beautiful, it has emeralds floating around it
You will gaze upon my cloud, which I lie on,
As my cloud carries me away, you'll wish you were me
When you sleep, you will dream about me
Every time a cool breeze comes by, it will quietly but quickly
Say my name, so you'll worship me even more
When falling leaves come down, they will have my name on them

Nichell Kee

Angry

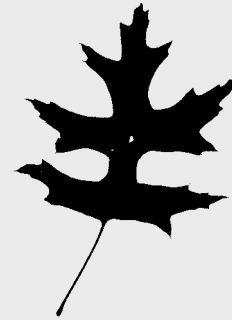
I know the meaning of anger:
This morning, I realized my homework was not finished.
I know I have problems with mean people
Meanness has lost its meaning
Sometimes I forget the good things my family does
to get the anger out of me
For weeks, I never stopped writing poems for relaxation
I still know my family, my poem, will always love me
I understand my life and the anger inside me.

Renita Williams

Better Than You

I have more money, cars, friends, houses and clothes than you
My life is better than yours, I rule you
Listen to me,
The mirror only reflects me
I float on clouds, you drown in water
You drown in leaves, I walk over you
I am taller than you, smarter than you,
prettier than you
but the point is,
that I am better than you

Tierra Thornton



Me

I have the power to love
They see me as a flower that gives love and strength
I'm free to move about and shake about
I have freedom
I'm not held up
My uniqueness is so powerful
Everyone knows my joyful smile is bright
Everyone sees that fantasy is not the thing for me
Reality is good, it shows who I really am
I am so brilliant, I am smarter than me

Tierra Thornton

Reality

Reality is a life check that
I need now
Reality is a little girl out on the street with no siblings
Reality is a woman who feeds birds
Reality is pen on paper writing a song
Reality is a note to every song I play on my clarinet

Shamá Better

Coming Home to D.C.

A nice day
It's hot, cars zoom past
The water from the fire hydrant goes splash
The people go boom
Bums on the corner
Electric cords, Pepco lines
The trees are dark
Leaves are everywhere
Music is playing, people are hanging
A child waves, I look
You smell the smoke from the grills
People eating, playing and dancing

Tierra Thornton



l-r: Cherish Gaines, Tierra Thornton

I am so

I am so strong I can move the solar system
I am so brilliant I can outsmart a genius
I am so beautiful people stare at me when I walk
I am so timeless I don't have time to waste
I am so tall I can step over the mountains
I am so mighty, I am so immovable
I am so rich I own the landscape for miles around me
I am so precious, diamonds sparkle when I walk past
I am so fragile I can't be touched
I am so like a cloud I can float over everyone

Shamá Better

At the back of progress

My midnight mazes through curtained cries
Harvest hollow screams like such a sad song
Dream distant dreams that fill your soul
Don't let dark reflected dreams get in your way of life
Descending silence is like a shallow space
Velvet students are like the royal family
This poem is like the altered words in my mind

Markus Johnson

Winter

I have frozen breath
Human pouring fire in the river
Smoke the color of the city
A red shirt is the color of the eyes of a child
The winter turns the child's tears to ice
The showers recall the wonders of the winter breath
The breath I take, the move I make, through the ice of winter.

The city is ice
Human breath, new air of ice
Wonder of all wonders, hold the fear
that the child has through the winter
The child's breath turns to ice
The ice turns to water
The water turns to winter.

Winter is a wonderful thing to be in
Cold, like the pool water
And cold as the freezer
The human body freezes through the cold of the winter
Wheels of the cars and trucks stop
The shoes of humans won't move
The shirt on the human's body won't come off,
The jeans won't come off, the child
needs help taking off her clothes.

The winter is snow, ice, and frozen breath
It is so cold I can't feel myself writing
I am so cold, I can't feel myself moving
I feel silence and fear
My vision is bleary
The word *write* can't ever be broken up
The life of the winter is helpful
The frozenness of boys is making me very happy
The season is winter!

Shamá Better



Kisses and Hugs

Kisses and Hugs are things I love
they to me are like baby doves
these are the things I put above
hugs are like shaking hands
in a different way
it's like saying hello or hey
you can give me hugs anytime
you want because Kisses and Hugs
are things I love.

Keyonna Plowden

Blindness

Born into the world with no vision
No identity and no decision
Magical midnight moon
Distant disturbance will be coming soon
Invisible man, drowsy well
Forbidden luck, shallow tale
Descending messages, hollow harmony
Juxtaposition, and women's intuition

Lisa Walker

Wooden Heart

I sit in this rainbow darkness
thinking gray memories
as my velvet soul speaks

Descending happiness
as I struggle through the glassed doorway
riding forbidden greetings
I feel as if I'm invisible

I'm walking through sudden trees
not being able to be seen
it seems that I'm in a dark
unlit room, trapped as my soul resurrects
throughout shallow darkness

Somaiya Blakney



Bruce Brown

Another Monday

Today I was standing at a drowsy bus stop.
As I was getting on the bus,
I saw a dormant mouse
I saw a man and a woman
who had a love resurrection.
On the bus, I rode past
a shallow house with a violent doorway.
I saw a lady with velvet eyes.
When I saw her eyes I thought
about my sunny memory.
Now my Monday is all over
just waiting for another Monday

Yasmin Jones

The Gladiator Story

When I drew black and red on a piece of paper
it turned into a tiger
it started running after me
so I climbed a tree
it jumped, so I started throwing rocks
then it went away.

I was playing with my friends;
it was dark and the moon looked like a triangle
and we looked at the stars
they looked like Ds and I said
it is nice
and cried in tears

Ronnard Williams

Circle

I am a circle on the tree that birds can come in
I believe that people should not be sad, they should always be happy
It's not my fault that trumpets are loud
I wonder,
does everybody go to church because everyone needs God?

When I am in Northeast,
I see a lot of ghetto people walking around
There is no way that I could live in England,
because I wouldn't understand them
Why are people like frozen ice?

I hope that unknown people can live a good life
I want to be remembered as a good person
I am afraid of God, but not of other people
If you want to understand me,
you must think about what I wrote down,
and you will know that this is a circle.

Tamekica Heckstall

Drama

My favorite colors are red and blue
I am supposed to be going up to Ballou
My favorite letter is D,
but doesn't anyone like me?

My sign is Leo, which makes the lion my favorite animal
and I am not surprised that it's a mammal
I love drumming, playing, and marching
and I also love talking
I used to go to the pool
but some swimmers are fools
They are square and I am a circle

The bee inside of me is telling me to fly,
but how can I if everyone is dying?
It's not safe, it's all black
the spaceship of light has just left
Now I must wait for the light to come
My life is great, but good God, I need a break.

Demetrius Gibbs

The life of people

The colors red and black,
lilies that roll into a waterbug,
ladies talking in the streets,
S that represents my name,
cute men walking as the women keep stalking
everyone's swimming circles in a square pool
people running like a cheetah, like someone got shot

Shanice Parker



l-r: Bruce Brown, Jamila Wade

Black Out

When I turn, I see red devils
that turn into dead sharks
kids crying in the dark
shadows that turn to crawling spiders
that spit at you
then turn to killer roses that
burn into blowing ashes,
to jumping people that
throw chrome bullets at you
and all of a sudden
black out

Chris Willis

Coming Home to D.C.

Coming home to D.C.
to see my family
to see what the world will look like again

Coming home to D.C.
I see people planting their gardens
I feel welcome in this world

Coming home to D.C.
I see the birds flying above
My eyes see trees growing from the ground

Coming home to D.C.
I see people walking forward
colors coming from the sky

Coming home to D.C.
I see a smiley face smiling at me
I wonder what D.C. does with the world

Antoinette Better



Shades of Green

shades of green are all around me
sometimes hidden and sometimes not
sometimes I just sit under a light
green leaved tree and think about
shades of green. I look at a flower
just a flower and I always think about
all the different shades of green that I love
so much.

Crishauna Gay

Know

I know the square root of 144
I know how to count backwards from 100
I know how to make poems
I know how to help people
I don't know philosophy
I lost the meaning of blues
Sometimes I try to reach the stars
I know I have a kind heart
Sometimes I forget that I can write to the stars
I realized this morning that I am a poet
I know I have the life of a God
I understand the meaning of love
I know I am a powerful writer

Bruce Brown



l-r: Marché Shields, Renita Williams

Addiction

Go relax
 talk sit
 pick up
 up no, no, no
 put you
 it have
 down to
 chat clean
 talk cook
 gossip wash
 spread no
 rumors no
 listen no
 laugh go
 enjoy go
 go
 stay pick
 away up
 get the phone
 away Ay, yi, yi
 Go go go Go!

Quanice Walters

Perfect

Talking grey and pink
 sunflowers that rise

Monkeys swinging into circles
 P, walking proudly

A rectangular stream
 running until it ends

A beautiful bird
 rolling into the nest to eat

Squares shaped so perfectly,
 a spider web in each corner
 and on the floor is a piece of hair

LaJean Pratt

Relax

Relax, relax, relax, relax
 Relax, relax, relax, relax
 Don't do any work at all
 I mean, don't do anything
 Nothing, nada, zip, finito
 Zilch, zed, nothing at all
 Don't, don't, don't, don't
 Don't, don't do anything

People say today is your day
 Every day will be your day
 Relax, relax, relax, relax
 Relax, relax, relax, relax
 Say no, no, no to drugs
 and no, no, no to work

Johnathan Richardson

Scars on my Body

Take away the pain I call my paradise
Take away the eyes that constantly bleed tears at night
Take away the darkness that overspreads the sky
And get rid of the scars on my body

Bring me makeup and a costume
To hide all my broken wounds
Never bring light to show me my way
Because I'll never walk and I'll never talk

The scars on my body are an invisible beauty to me
But they're tearing my life apart
I feel like a broken chain
Broken and thrown away like a toy

But don't feel sorry for me; feel sorry for yourself
You laugh at the scars on my body because they're different
But the scars on my body laugh because you're ugly
In order for me to feel better
As if the goodbye to my life takes forever

Mariah Cooper

Daughters and Mothers

Mother and daughter become close
when daughter becomes mother and
mother becomes grandmother.

Stanisha Gaskins

Silence

I like silence when I'm mad
I like silence when I'm sad
When I'm happy silence is my thing
Some people like to sing
I just like silence.

Davon Rawlings

Sadly Depressed

Every morning, the curtain rises and shows me the shining sun
and the very violent village in its beautiful darkness
Each time I look, my morning starts out on the wrong foot
I get up and walk through the jumping doorway
enter the hallway to get prepared
I go outside to experience the altered rain
that messes up my clothes
Soon I get a breaking memory of going back to school
Entering the building, smelling the forbidden air of education
Suddenly you can hear the crazy piano, the descending computer
and the dormant floors the students walk on
Gratefully, I can finally leave
I walk home on the rusty reflected road the rain dropped on for hours
At the back of progress I think of all the unfinished business
There were a hundred things I could have thought about to make me happy
but all of them were unresolved burdens
I look in the alley to see the stray pride of curly curtained cats,
their moods are the same as mine
Sad and depressed, figuring out how to end their problems
They all sit in a round circle in the rain like fully fallen fools,
like they all lost hope
and I join in with them, like I lost hope too
It's not like having something to do, but
this is much better than enduring pain by myself
I'll be in a clique where I won't feel alone
I feel a little better.
Me and the pride stare at the rain, like a Monday midnight movie
After I leave, I feel bliss, preparing for another Monday
Going to sleep to get a taste of tomorrow
and hopefully the day will get better

Maryum Abudullah



l-r: Taylor Peterson, Jerahmeel Shields

Coming Home 2 D.C.

Coming home 2 D.C. is a tragedy
You see the same nothing people
Singing their shoulda's and their coulda's and their woulda's.
You see more killings
And you see more teen pregnancy
But what you don't see is peace.

What is happening to our National Capital?
I'll tell you, half of D.C. is living with AIDS
More fathers neglecting their children
It doesn't make any sense.
Coming home 2 D.C. is the worst.

But let's get to the positive side of D.C.:
The sky is beautiful
The homes are wonderful
The girls have style
The boys have class
The trees are tall
And the school has really great teachers.
So don't ask me why I wrote this
Ask your mother.

Mariah Cooper



Sugar

Get the sugar sweet
Get the bubble gum
Get the cookie
Get the ice cream
Get it, get it
You have to have it

Get the lollipop
Get the chocolate cupcake
Get the strawberry shortcake
Get the jawbreaker
You have to munch it
chew it, crunch it
lick it, bite into all kinds of sugar

Remember we are best friends
ever since the age of two
I made you the sugar king
You have to have it,
you must have it, you will have it
Get it, get it, get it, get it
Now don't you feel great?
Sugar rush!

Bruce Brown

In Praise of the Apple Tree

the apple tree is so tall
I just stand and look
at it, it's the best tree
and I love apples so much
I could eat apples for breakfast,
lunch and dinner.

Hi Apple are you having
fun? Do you want to play
today? Maybe you can
come outside and play
with me today, you look
good enough to eat, please
apple tree and I will always
take care of you.

Angelo Martin



l-r: Mercede Monroe, Shavon Osbourne

Rainy Season

One day during the rainy season I saw a narrow road
so I walked down that narrow road, on the ground
I saw some burnt orange leaves, a whole path of them
ahead there was a fire and I did nothing but look.

Adrian Williams

I am

I am a brilliant, beautiful species
I am luminous, I dazzle like sparkling glitter
I am very humble inside
I am fragile; I'm supposed to be handled with care
I am an emerald, admired by everybody
I am a fountain of glowing diamonds
I am like a spring breeze or like a smooth wind when I approach
I am everyone's dream
I illuminate people with my grace
I am an African queen; I'm supposed to be worshipped
I am like wonderful landscapes, my appearance is photogenic
I am the freedom of all people
I am genial, I am a help
I am the best thing on this Earth
And no one can beat that

Maryum Abdullah

A Nice Place

I have a memory of a hidden place, it is fresh
and I feel the freedom of the silence as I watch
the sun setting. There are moments when I am unsure
of whether it is real, I thought it was a dream
but it feels real and good just like it should.

In the distance of the sunset I felt compassion
within, a desire to have this memory of where I go
to the water and I see bubbles there and somehow I
know I have to worship and protect my universe
to keep it a secret from everyone.

Anthony Sterling

D.C.

A summer Sunday is a day near the sun in space
People lose their vision
like an eagle poking a snake's eyes
We have a failure of keeping our air clean
and the Anacostia is dirty water
We see killing on the streets
but we really don't do anything about it
We declared freedom, but
are we really free from this slave train?
People can be independent,
but not have independence in this world
People fear, just to be feared by no one
I thought when I was young
That I was not unique
until school changed
not just my life, but everyone else's life too

Bruce Brown



Marché Shields

To See The Rain

it is a rainy day outside today
there is no one to play with
I just look out at the cool
blue rain and think that
someone is crying or upset
so it rains and rains and rains
I love the sun and when it rains
I really get upset because I love
to be outside

Stanisha Gaskins

In Praise of the Daisy

I praise the daisy
the daisy blooms in the spring
the petals are white like the wings
of an angel and the center is yellow
like the sun. The daisy is pretty
and my favorite flower and they
stand tall like towers, I praise the daisy
as I always say I love daisies
in a special way

Simone Craig

The Season Tree

I have a tree that I worship for her special ability
she survives the cold snow and the hot sun
a pine tree sits in my front yard
we take care of her and give her love
I treat our tree like she's part of my family
when she gets old and before she falls down
I will pluck a leaf from her so that I never
forget the fun days we had.

A new tree will grow and I will have more
fun and it will never be done until I'm
a hundred and one.

Crishauna Gay

My day out

I went to shoe city for dance season
as I left the store a red leaf fell from
a tree and hit me on the knee
as the sun went down, the moon
came up so I rode the bus, as I rode
the bus time flew by just like someone
standing high, I got off the bus, the worst
thing happened at the top of the hill,
my shoe snapped off like someone
clapping, I looked up at the sky and
thought what a bad day, but I still got my
shoes hey, he, hey.

Quanika Jackson



It's All Too Much

I went downtown to buy a moonbike
I saw a girl her name was Mike
I sat on a burnt bench, it had a little stench
I saw red blood and rolled in the mud
I went to school and had to dance alone
I ate a sandwich and got feet damage
She will never forget what I said
And now it's time for me to go to bed.

Davon Rawlings

About Me

Yesterday was amazing I saw daisy lights
they were so bright as I rode the bus
I saw orange clouds and I was surprised
but smiled then I looked on the ground
and saw a crawling dog and when I got
home I danced alone in front of the window
it was a rainy winter season so I wore my
leaf colored suit and I looked so cute
I heard sounds of the ocean and when I looked
in the mirror everything was shining down on me.

Daisha Martin

I Believe

I believe in the mysteries of the universe
I believe that fish cannot swim out of water
I believe that there are no dinosaurs left on our planet
I believe that penguins cannot fly
I believe that lions do not eat apples
And I believe that children don't drive.

Jasper Hicks

Silence

I heard an old saying that silence is golden
With silence I'm thinking of vehicles that I rode in
With silence you can use exaggeration
And anything else that helps your imagination
So use silence whenever you can and please
Remember that old saying.

Lance Slaughter



Steven Brown

Life

Time is like a never ending water fall
that controls your movements as the days goes by
the moon arrives so blue and bright like a clear rain
as I go to sleep
for the day is over
I see a candle so red and fiery like a red leaf in fall
the moon finally disappears from the sky and I see not the moon but the sun
the sun is so yellow it's goldness keeps us all happy

No person knows when they are going to leave
and no one knows if there really is a heaven or a hell for us to
go to.

Mark Neal



BOMANI ARMAH, GABRIELLE MARTIN & JAMES SAUNDERS

Guest Artists

30

TOP PHOTO, back row- l-r: Gabrielle Martin, Bomani Armah, James Tindle, Luqman Abdullah, Maryum Abdullah, James Saunders. Front row- l-r: Marché Shields, Brittany Watkins
MIDDLE PHOTO, back row- l-r: Gabrielle Martin, Bomani Armah, James Tindle, Luqman Abdullah, Maryum Abdullah, James Saunders. Front row- l-r: Brittany Watkins, Marché Shields
BOTTOM PHOTO, l-r: Gabrielle Martin, James Saunders, Bomani Armah

The D.C. Creative Writing Workshop's newest writer-in-residence is Bomani D. Armah, a musician, artist, spoken word performer, and community activist as well as a published writer. Bomani works with seventh grade classes at Hart Middle School and helps supervise after-school programs at Hart. James Saunders, the pioneer poet in our Young Writers-in-Residence program, is a 15 year old sophomore at Ballou High School, a three year veteran of the Workshop's programs at Hart Middle School, a two-time winner of the Parkmont Poetry Contest, and a first place winner in the Larry Neal Awards for Youth Poetry. James works with elementary and middle school students in the Workshop's after-school programs. On Monday, December 5, Bomani and James joined Gabrielle Martin, another veteran Workshop participant who is currently working on the Ballou High School newspaper, for a round-table discussion on the art of writing. Also participating in the discussion were Luqman Abdullah, Maryum Abdullah, Nichell Kee, Marché Shields, James Tindle, and Brittany Watkins.

MARChÉ: Why do people write?

GABRIELLE: Well, I write because sometimes I feel pain and it's better for me to get my pain out on paper.

BOMANI: I write because I like being creative. And, honestly, I like the attention. I like being able to tell stories from different angles--that inspires me to write more.

JAMES SAUNDERS: Writing is something I'm good at, and I like to go towards those things. It's a way to show off.

LUQMAN: Why do people write about certain things in their life? Is it because they like them or because they hate them?

BOMANI: For a lot of people, writing is therapeutic. Even if you just write for yourself, when you read

stuff that you wrote, it can help you put it into perspective. Sometimes when you write something and you read it for an audience, even if it's something painful for you, it helps you shed that energy, or whatever it is, from you so it's not that painful anymore. It's something that helps in a way

JAMES S.: You so know that answer to that question

MARYUM: Why is there so much grief and emotional stress in some literature?

BOMANI: I think a lot of artists are troubled souls. That's kind of a prerequisite for being a writer. But I know me, personally, I write about a lot of "happy stuff" just because I feel like writing like that, just to be different. But since I think many people use writing as therapy, they need therapy to relieve them

from that angst, and that's why it ends up being full of pain and suffering and sadness.

GABRIELLE: Well, that's basically what I did too. I began writing because when I started going through a lot of pain, I felt like when I got my pain out on paper it helped me synthesize my feelings. I got it off my chest and I got it off my mind. But then I found out that people were actually interested in what I was writing, so I made this something that I want to do for a career.

LUQMAN: Can writing express what you see in nature? Can it be like an illustration?

BOMANI: Painting pictures? Yeah, I think that's the best way, when your narrative can be seen visually, when people automatically end up with a movie script in their heads because of the way you put your words together real poetically.

MARYUM: Okay, when authors write books, why do they use pen names instead of their real names?

BOMANI: I think that's a prerequisite for rappers--having pen names, because sometimes the person you are as a writer is not who you really are. Mark Twain wasn't Samuel Clemmons, he was a different person. Using another name helps you get into a different personality when you tell a story. I've used writing names before, both as an M.C. and as a poet, and sometimes when you think you're another person, it helps you think of things differently. It helps you be a little more creative.

MARCHE: How long have you been writing?

JAMES S.: I've been writing for about five years now, since sixth grade.

GABRIELLE: I've been writing since the fourth grade, so I've been writing for about six, seven years. I began the Writing Club in sixth grade and it's

helped me further my talents into high school. I was a three year student in the Writing Club and now I'm currently working on the student newspaper at Ballou.

JAMES S.: There was this one incident when I realized that I could write, you know, really write. I was young, I was in second grade, so I didn't really know what writing was. I just thought, you know, it was the assignment. But in sixth grade, I think I rekindled it in Writing Club. I was at an age when I understood more what writing was, and I was mature enough to actually like something like writing. So in sixth grade I started back up and I ran with it, and I'm still writing now.

BOMANI: In my English classes when I was younger, I always liked to write short stories, essays, whatever. Actually, it was one of the few things I thought was fun. All the kids in my neighborhood had our own rap groups and stuff when we were younger, so we liked to write like that. But the first poem I really remember being serious about was a poem I wrote called "Sixteen Going On Seventeen." And that's when I really got serious.

MARYUM: What got you started in poetry?

BOMANI: Maybe just needing a creative outlet, I've always been involved in different things creatively, whether it be music or acting, and poetry allowed me to be the most original. And also, here in Washington, D.C., the poetry scene is so cool, that it was easy for me to get into. Especially coming right out of high school into college, I really got sucked into it pretty deeply. I think that's probably the biggest influence.

BRITTANY: Who said that poems have to rhyme? A lot of people say when you write a poem, you have to rhyme with it.

BOMANI: A poem definitely doesn't have to rhyme. I think a poem should have structure; rhyme doesn't necessarily have to be that structure, but it should have some kind of form to it. Rhyming is sometimes a limitation. But also, if you don't

usually rhyme, sometimes it's good as a mental exercise to make yourself rhyme, to try to be able to make sense, line after line, while keeping the rhyme going. It helps you become a better writer when you're not rhyming.

JAMES S.: Well, I'm young, I'm still a child, but as a "young" writer I'd say that with the first things I started writing, I loved to rhyme. I had such a vague understanding of writing, so it was like, "Poetry is rhyming, you know, it's always rhyming--da da da da da." But as I grew, rhyming has become something that I do very seldom. It really depends on how I'm feeling. Maybe I'll rhyme...

BOMANI: I think that rhyming has become so cliché. In order to become a good rhymers, you have to put in a lot of effort, and you can't rhyme "bat" with "cat" and "hat." You've got to really put some effort into it in order to get away with rhyming these days.

JAMES TINDLE: In writing, what gives you your words? After being in Writing Club since sixth grade, did you find your vocabulary increased? Have you learned a lot of new words?

JAMES S.: In the past, there were good qualities in me that were subliminal, like I had a knack for English. I learned to use context clues really well. And that transcended into me being very interested in vocabulary. I started reading the dictionary, and Writing Club showed me a whole new world that really revolved around words. It just showed me so much. I love words now, I love writing now, and I would have never gotten it if I hadn't gone through this process. And I'm really thankful for it.

Writing Club showed me a whole new world that really revolved around words ... I love words now, I love writing now, and I would have never gotten it if I hadn't gone through this process. And I'm really thankful for it.



back row- l-r: Gabrielle Martin, Bomani Armah, James Tindle, Luqman Abdullah, Maryum Abdullah, James Saunders. Front row- l-r: Marché Shields, Brittany Watkins

Vacation Bible School

Bomani D. Armah

I

In the darkest
corner of the fairest city
on an orange
hot evening
right before
the sun slipped
over the edge
a single bullet
leapt
from the cold concrete.
It quickly
clawed its way
through an eighty
year old
stained glass
window
and into the upper
room.
It hungrily
chewed through
the back
of a wooden
chair where on
Monday
Reggie sat
and with his small palms
smacked out a go-go
on the table
until you could see the red
under his dirty fingernails.
Singing, "Sardines, and
Pork n Beans!"
Like the fellas did

on the hoods of cars on the street
between the liquor store and church
he cranked out his tune
until one of the old mothers said
"You betta quit day mess!"

II

In the darkest corner
of the fairest city on a orange hot evening
right before the sun slipped
over the edge,
a single bullet leapt
from the cold concrete.
It quickly clawed its way
through an eighty year old
stained glass window
and into the upper room.
It chewed
through the back of a
wooden chair where
Tuesday
Yolanda sat
tired from smiling
blissfully enjoying the ruckus
of children scampering
with blue and red blobs
on their hands and faces.
She rested, her legs spread wide,
her hands rubbing her full belly,
eyes gleaming,
cheeks sore from grinning.
She whispered quietly,
"Lord, please let me keep this one."

III

In the darkest corner of the fairest city
on an orange hot evening right
before the sun slipped
over the edge, a single bullet leapt
from the cold concrete.
It clawed its way into an eight year old

stained glass window and into the
upper room.
It chewed through the back of a
wooden chair where on
Wednesday
David sat
quietly
with milk saucer eyes and a full
heart
basking in the glow,
soaking in one of six days a year
he spends in the "Lord's House."
The air conditioning was
pleasantly pinching his neck
like the hint of lemon in tea,
while he tongued bits of Oscar Meyer
out of his new front teeth.
He carefully clinched his new jewels
to keep his jaw from dropping
as he watched children
his own age
smiling
beautifully blind
to the troubles of his world.

IV

In the darkest corner of the fairest
city on a hot
evening right before the sun slipped
over the edge,
a single bullet leapt from the concrete.
It clawed its way through an eighty year old
stained glass window and into the
upper room.
It chewed through the back of a
wooden chair where on
Thursday
Tiffany say,
ashy elbows on the table
hands under her chin
sloppy red fingernails

tapping her rosy cheeks.
The prodigal son story
echoing through her ears
she was busy eyeballing
her boyfriend
at the other end of the room
with the big kids
in the junior high class.
She thought his name
should have "Ice"
or "Dog" in it somewhere.
He didn't know he was her
boyfriend.
It didn't matter.

V

In the darkest corner of the fairest city on a
hot evening right before
the sun slipped over the edge, a
single bullet leapt from
the concrete. It clawed its way into
stained glass window
and into the upper room. It chewed
through the back of a
chair where on
Friday
Lil' Kenny say
straining to reach
the different colored basins
to dip his tightly knotted t-shirt
with rubber bands
he envisions a beautiful collage
an explosion of red and blue
fireworks
not knowing
he was only making a purple mess
on his Osh-Kosh.
The shirt was a gift for Kirk
who could barely walk
and was hard to understand
except for when he sang
"He's in My Heart."

(continued on the following page)

EPILOGUE

On Sunday
Deacon Jones stole away from the
jubilation
of the Sunday school class
as they howled “This is the Day.”
He slowly made his way
up a flight of stairs.
Upon looking up he saw a small,
deep hole
where the day before
a single bullet had leapt
from the cold concrete.
It had quickly clawed its way
through
an eighty year old
stained glass window
and into the upper room.
It had hungrily chewed through
the back of a wooden chair
and burrowed itself in the ceiling.
Deacon Jones raised his head
to the sky
thanking the Lord
that they rested on Saturday



*top-bottom: Bomani Armah, James
Saunders, Marché Shields, Gabrielle
Martin, Brittany Watkins*

To Be in a Song

by James Saunders

To be intertwined with the meticulous melody,
to ebb and flow with the rhythm,
to know it's clearly polyphonic;
To equate the color red with the timbre
because the lyrics burn with such powerful emotion,
to feel safe in its warm chorus,
to be equally excited to see
the vamp every time it appears,
to share the vision of the song
to have the same desire to touch the listener,
to be beautiful,
to be art,
to be content with myself
and
never want to leave this beautiful place
a song.

Non-Conformist

by James Saunders

Call me a gothic mohawk, spiked
and gelled to dark, rebellious
perfection.

Call me a hippie guitar, studded
with icons of peace and unity.

Let me drive my freedom-fueled
punchbuggy through your mind
and soul.

Call me an environmentally aware,
bargain shopping, jellybean sandal-wearing,
bird feeding, obsessive compulsive
disorder wielding, animal loving vegan.

Call me the girl wearing flower prints
when they are no longer in.

Call me retro in the 'hood.

Call me the rotten apple that
spoil the bunch.



Expressions of My Prime

by Gabrielle Martin

My gaze is flaming like the color of my rage.
It is my custom to enchant your mind.
And I'm very good at maintaining my secrecy.
I am capable of living in this transparent society,
However, this reality is overwhelming
and I always feel distraught.
I believe in my existence
because everyone is here for a reason.
If I speak of my unattainable desires
my mind receives a break in its pique.
To love is sometimes a false truth
because no one can love you
as much as you do.

*l-r: James Tindle, Maryum Abdullah,
Luqman Abdullah*

My Grandma Old Blossom Rose

It grew in the summer died in the fall
gave some good love to my Grandma's
garden, a rose that flowered and blossomed
Just for her and now I miss my Grandmother
Old Blossom Rose.

I love you Old Blossom Rose and
I miss you and I wish you were
here to talk to me.

LaShawn Jackson

The God of Heat

A long long time ago
everyone in the land was freezing
it was below 20 degrees
there was no heat at all
no one had coats to wear
and some owned only sweaters

One day the God of Heat
reached up into the sky and
reclaimed the sun, he reached
so far you could not see his arm
above his wrist
the people of the land
shouted for him to
bring the heat! bring the heat!
he grabbed the sun and brought
it closer to the land
everyone was happy and cheered
and that's how we got heat
thank you God of Heat.

Jasmine Thomas

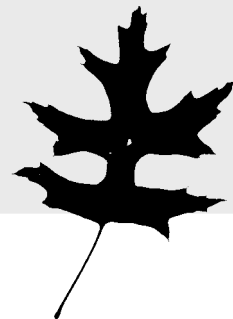
It's All Too Much

I was outside watching the moon
sway back and forth
there are shadows everywhere and
the only lights I see are street lights
shining on benches as cars ride
past and never stop
it gets darker

Time moves on
the clouds are all gone
stars stretch past the horizon
I stop to smell the daisies
and never turn back

It reminds me of yesterday
when I heard the sounds of the sea
and then it started to rain
I got in my car and drove
As drops of water hit the cars windows.

Larry West



Around Here

Around here time never rushes by
Around here we dance alone in the dark
Around here we scream when a car speeds past us
Around here the weather is warm and the sunlight is blinding
Around here the dogs bark as if they are in danger

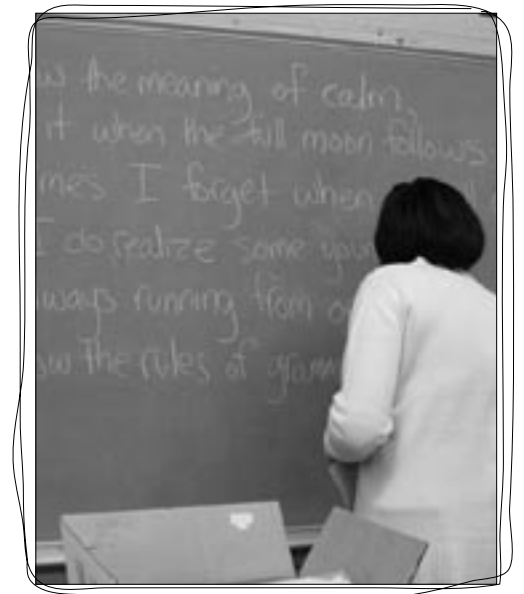
Ashley Walker

Air

Air is something we breathe in and out
all the time when we're about
to and eat and then to go and sleep

Air blows through my hair in the summertime
sometimes it gets under your feet
Air is around on rainy days
Air moves the clouds in a cool blue season
Air is a cloud bursting with sweetness
Air is something we breathe that tastes
sweet like water to me.

Ceshelle Evans



Jamila Wade

In Praise of the Tulip

Beauty does not describe my tulip whose pearl red petals rise
like the sun each morning in spring.

My mother keeps a roof over my head year round and my tulip
grows in her heart. In spring my tulip sits on the porch blossoming
brightly, deeply rooted in dirt so moist and rich.

DaShawn Taylor

Goddess of Diamonds

I am the Goddess of Diamonds
I'm a stone that shines bright like the sun
so bright you won't believe your eyes
I am used to cut metal, I'm magical
mystical and you can wear me on your fingers

I'm a girl's best friend
I'm clear and precious so they call me Diamond
and mine me all the way from South Africa
and I am very expensive

Diamond Bedney

Red Day

Today I saw a bike dance
with an orange man whose burnt dog
barked fire, I jumped on the bus
that felt like an ocean while a red leaf
fell from the sky, the bus rode down an
orange street that rained warm red drops

As night came I saw a red moon and got
off the bus and sat on a bench where the
burnt dog was eating a red sandwich.

I forgot the daisy sea was warm and I was
alone so I left and got on the bus and went home.

Giovanni Copeland

The Singing Castle

There's a singing castle full of songs
where children sing and sing and sing
all day long
it's spring all the time there
each day the flowers bloom
their trumpets blowing music
sweet flowers for every tune
there's candy flowing everywhere
children dancing, eating and playing
birds chirping and flying
everyone sings at the singing castle
all day long and I want to ask you
to join me and come along

Ricole Brown



Pineapples

Your sweet and sour taste is good
you're so delicious I could eat you for an hour or two
I really love fruit but you're the best one
if I get a lot of money
I'll spend it all on you
then I'll never be done
eating pineapples

You know I'll eat you if I'm really
really hungry
I'll keep eating you forever even if
You stung me
You're sweet and sour and that's why
I love you

Rico Sanchez



Nichell Kee

Who Am I?

My gaze is like the silence of the sunset
bright breezy and beautiful
it stills my heart while I listen to nature
it is my custom to walk in freedom and I walk in freedom
when I make my own choices and decisions
I am capable of overwhelming tasks like the God Neptune
who commands the oceans
I command and control my own world and use rivers to
send my messages.

John Brunson

To A Tree

Dear Tree,

You look nice today
Lots of your leaves are off of you
Bless you dear tree

So tell me how are you doing? Have you been cold this winter?
Oh! That's right trees don't talk. Thank you for
Shade when it was hot. I watch you from inside
Every day and we all love you so much dear tree

Anthony Bullock

In My Head

I picture me coming upstairs
in the hallway talking in my head
I hear everything that is going on around me
yet I'm silent
deep deep in my head
just thinking
thoughts and different stuff
thoughts running like a lost dog
I think about what I hear around me
no one can hear my thoughts
or what I'm thinking about
that's why I like to listen
to myself and my thoughts
they say lots and no one knows
what's going on inside

Isiah Jackson

Peace will keep us steady

Perhaps being quiet can teach us to unite.
Let's not speak about the divine echo of the disturbing riots.
For once, let's download all of our confessions,
and not rush to put a grudge on someone.

No more violence, no more disasters
Being truthful and honest would not harm our souls.
If people put their guns down,
they would not have to dig another hole.

Without weapons, without violence
We would not miss someone getting hurt.
Maybe peace will keep us steady,
Keep us safe
Keep us ready.

Close-minded people might disrupt the atmosphere.
We should open our eyes and talk sense into them.

Parris Robertson



Tiona Wade

My Voice

My voice hides from people
 It tries to surprise you and speaks
 as loud as the sun is bright.
 When I speak, the whole earth
 says it's cool, when I say hello
 it says hello back.
 When my words reach your ears
 your mind will tell you, this kid is soothing,
 this kid is cool.
 When I call your name
 my voice hides from you.

Damon Kee

Keeping Quiet

Let's not rush to hail and live a terrible life
 We should make attempts to better ourselves
 What I want should not be mistaken for the devil's work
 Silence is what it is about
 Maybe peace will keep us steady, keep us motivated.
 With unity and with honesty
 We should open our eyes and see the outside world.

Violence will disrupt the peace and freedom
 No more wars, no more fights
 Confessions can teach us different things every day
 But, let's not speak about the riots
 Let's not disturb the peace.

Openness will not harm your soul
 Angels will put down their halos for you.

Shavon Osbourne

V.O.I.C.E.

My voice is kind and powerful.
 My voice is courageous.
 It can be difficult at times
 but is easy to understand.
 I make sure that my voice
 is heard by so many people.
 My voice can do serious
 damage if pushed to a certain point.
 My V.O.I.C.E. is me.

Diamonique A. Campfield

White Suit with a Gray Face

I will never forget
when my sister went home,
she always had a bright
smile on her face.
I will never forget
the day she left me.
My sister was very goofy,
outgoing and nonchalant.
I remember the white suit
and gray face she had on
at her funeral.
I could see her chest shift
as she lay there in her casket,
as if she were letting me know
she was still alive and waiting
for me to come with her into
the gates of heaven.
I will never forget the day
my brother told me she said
for us to be strong.
When he told me that,
I knew I could not cry for her anymore.

Troi Stevenson



My Voice

My voice is medium
My voice is dark
My voice sounds like a big clock
My voice has speed, strength and power
My voice has ball handles
My voice is a swish sound

Maxx Johnson

My Voice

My voice is nonchalant
like a doctor's
when he is about to tell a mother
her child has just died.

My voice is casually indifferent,
yet, so tranquil
like a deep blue freshwater stream,
gliding to a huge pond.
My voice can be mean,
when I speak, you can detect my presence
like I have been standing
standing on that same spot
singing and singing as if
there was no one around.

Troi Stevenson

Within His Spirit

I look down on you
and as an inanimate object
you shouldn't budge
but in my eyes you stand strong
your life is above mine
you're tough and strong
you show power above things in the forest
but like a tree you're bold and cool
if you could stand,
I think you would lead
you would be a foundation for people to lean on
you are a tower of hope,
a bold, steel tower, immovable,
you could say life itself surrounds you.

You are a lost soul, but your essence
still lives within, within him,
you pull off strong from the ground
like a rocket, you soar high
you are a symbol of power
you live within.

James Tindle



l-r: Steven Brown, Reginald Conway, Bruce Brown

The Teardrop

My day, it had come,
no longer could I hide behind a brick wall
it was like I was a glass wall
and you could see right through me.
Every flashing light, the black and white suits
clapping like blows of thunder
and the faces of angels.
And it came, the rivers and open seas
that were hiding in the backs of my eyes.
And the waterfall flowed,
the sparkling tear fell like a crystal,
a sapphire oval hit the floor,
and it fell through.
It hit my soul.

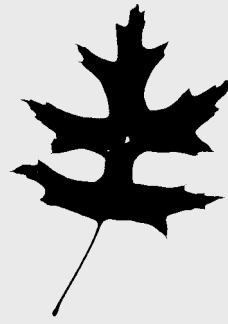
James Tindle

Used in My Own Way

People have unique voices.
When people die,
people's voices cry
so that the pain
can go away.

My voice is everywhere
used in my own way.
When someone leaves, it gets real quiet.
When I'm happy, my voice is soft.
When I'm angry, my voice goes mad
just like people go away
at the end of the day.

Daniel Gaskins



James, the god of war

I walk through ceased valleys
of dead bodies,
no one knows silent life exists,
people walk and talk, but some
don't appreciate life,
some walk with guns and knives
demolishing innocent people's lives
I walk coming,
letting peace walk through those
ceased valleys and dead bodies.
I bring peace to this world.
I make a difference.
I stand for peace and hope.
I am James, the god of war.

James Tindle

Home for the Holidays

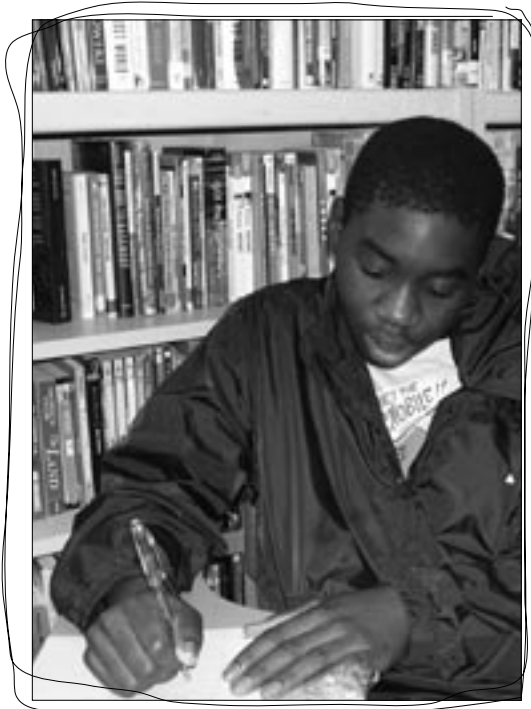
Back home for the holidays,
no ordinary day.
The trees are bald,
the ground is silky,
the girls still walk freely
as if it's July.
I walk outside and the sides of buildings
are dirtied with words.
Hear my cry.
The wet smoke fills my lungs
and I can't breathe.
The misty fog dampens the air around me,
those little sprays of a stream.
A fantasy of a strong bond is dreamt
but is really broken without struggle.

James Tindle

Oblivion

If the world was to end today,
I would do a lot of things,
some might be smart or dumb.
I would throw bricks at moving cars, would you?
I'd take the best car from the Cadillac lot,
maybe I'll blow it up.
I'd walk around all day
in Snoopy jammies and a tank top.
Hang out with my friends, maybe play some games.
Declare that I am a prince.
Bust my dad out of jail,
spend one day with him.
But it really doesn't matter
because later I'll forget him.

Aaron Brooks



James Saunders

In the Distance

My gaze is like a trickle that doesn't lose aim.
It is my custom to play basketball,
just going like there's no tomorrow.
And I'm very good at thinking and putting it on paper.
I'm capable of destroying my world and yours.
But, I'm nice so I might not do that.
I always feel like I'm stuck
and my soul can't get to heaven,
as every day goes by
I'm getting closer to hell.

Aaron Brooks

The City

The city is like a battlefield
People can be hostile and cocky
But nice and calm
From morning to night, it's a blur
Because of this night madness in the blind
In the morning, you usually expect good things to happen
But when bad things come through, it strikes with a blinding blow
When you stop to think about what just happened
You encounter the worst thing
Something that is just dull and mean
You've seen an enemy
They strike with a mighty blow
Now the opponent is winning
Because their blows are like razors
Sharp and on point
The power in your eyes and mind rises high
So you charge with power
The city is like a battlefield
But you will win the battle

Ashley Cooper



My voice is true

My voice is funny
But my voice also changes
My voice is attracting
let's not forget deep
My voice is outstanding and bold
My voice uplifts
And your gears might shift
My voice may be a surprise
Make you open your eyes
My voice is true
And may commit crimes
Don't worry if a tear comes out of your eye
My voice is a lot and I'm not scared
My voice loves the spotlight, now I have shared

Chris Beckham

Gods of Happiness and Madness

If there was a god of happiness and a god of madness,
they'd be at each other's throats.
The god of happiness would try to keep the peace,
while the god of madness would do the opposite.
Sometimes when it comes down to it,
you'll have to do things wrong.
But, if you don't have to,
then why would you?
When something is going wrong,
look on the bright side.
Never provoke things,
get on the good side.
Happiness is like running through a field of flowers,
like winning money and putting it to good use.
Madness is like hell,
no one wants to go.
It's like the devil,
no one likes him or wants to be like him.
Madness is the bad behavior
that some people show.
But when happiness steps in
that madness 'gots to go.

J.C. Morrow

My Route

When I was young
all I could think of
was football.
I couldn't catch a pass
but I loved the sport
with my heart.
One day something sparked,
I caught the ball
on the most important down
of my life.
That encouraged me
to continue the route.

Chris Beckham



l-r: Reginald Conway, Bruce Brown

How Strong My Voice Is

My voice is strong
It is strong like it lifts weights
Strong enough to lift a three-ton elephant
My voice is like an all out blitz coming through the offensive line
It's tackling the quarterback and hurting the players
Putting them on the stretcher
That's how strong my voice is

Larry Pinkard

Silence will keep us safe

Let's not speak about all
of these new disasters.
We should make attempts to stop
the vocal crossfires.
Maybe no noise will keep us steady.
For once, shut up.
Your constant screams
are disturbing the peace.
What I want should not be mistaken for nonsense.
Perhaps silence can teach us unity.
Killers will put down
their deadly instruments of mass destruction.
No more riots, no more noise
without ignorance, without speech.
Not talking would not harm anyone.
We are likely to miss the Lord's call.
We should open our eyes
and close our mouths.
Silence will keep us safe
as a sacred gift of life.
Perhaps if we stop talking
we won't take our last breaths
so early.

Mercedé Monroe



The sound of my voice

My voice is attractive
it speaks loudly
My voice is worthy
it deserves a lot
My voice is positive
it cannot be controlled
My voice is lovely
My voice is attractive

Genise Johnson

the District of Columbia

The fright of D.C. is a shock to me.
Downtown all around are people making paper –
drug dealers wear baggy clothes
businessmen wear suits, carrying briefcases with important negotiations
working girls walk the line of lust, and
schools deteriorate above students and teachers' heads.
Maybe for a day, a president will be brave,
not such a coward.
A war represents the District of Columbia.

Brittany Watkins



l-r: Erica Kyle, Terrence Patterson

Refusing Silence

Refusing silence by knowing my name
 I proudly yell out into the world
 my name is. . . .
 Refusing silence again by knowing my name
 I scream, my name is. . . .
 Still nothing comes out.
 I take a long look into my complicated soul,
 my heartbeat puts my answer into simple words:
 Don't refuse silence,
 embrace it.

Diamond Mitchell

She

She walks down the
 road to her life in fear,
 a symphony plays as
 her death comes
 clear to everyone,
 she shocked her audience
 to a surprising halt.
 She cries in grief
 and runs away from
 the light because
 she is afraid. Afraid
 to die again. Her
 memory is killed
 by a cursed arrow
 through the heart.
 She screams,
 and when she cries
 her silence is broken
 due to her sorrowful life
 that was nothing to no one.
 Quietness fills her world
 even though she makes as
 much noise as possible.
 No food, no money, no life.
 Desperate, she seeks
 uniqueness, and
 she finds it. Her eyes
 stare at the world with
 bare openings and her
 moments shine as her
 uniqueness kick starts
 her life. She smiles and thinks
 what a wonderful world.

Brittany Watkins

The Barbershop Chair

As I watched my grandfather
thrive to keep his business up,
he would cut hair.
That was his job.
He used to wear an apron.
He was blessed with cutting hair.
One customer would come
and sit in the chair,
my grandfather would be laughing
and having a good time.

When I'd come in,
he'd smile and give me a hug
maybe even some money.
I loved him a lot.

When he had no customers,
he'd sit in the chair, stare and think.
Most of his life was at the barbershop,
and most of the action took place
in the barbershop chair.

Brandie Keys

Crossing Rivers

Crossing rivers is when you look down
and don't see water, you see a whole life ahead of you.
Crossing rivers is having fun with your best friend in the pool.
Crossing rivers, like when someone is trying to teach you something
and you, being the smart one, listen.
Crossing rivers is being a good writer, and
trying to work together as one.
Crossing rivers, being the best person you can be.

Sequinta Millet

Blueberry Tree

My grandma's blueberry tree,
so big and green.
As me and my grandma sit by it,
we think of all the good things we did.
Three months later, she passed away,
I was so sad.
Whenever I think of her,
I go to this blueberry tree
and think about what we did,
what we talked about.
She was good to me.
One day, there was something
I just had to tell her, but I couldn't.
But now I can
because of this blueberry tree.

Erika Stephens



Sleep with Your Eyes Open

Sleeping with my eyes open
am I scared
to sleep?
Sleeping with my eyes open
as I dream to go
deeply asleep.
Sleeping with my eyes open
so nothing bad will
happen to me.
Sleeping with my eyes open
shhh . . . let me be.
I'm trying to close my eyes.

Nicole Diggs



l-r: Nichell Kee, Marché Shields, Renita Williams, Steven Brown, Bruce Brown

My Traveling Voice

My voice is strong
My voice travels
My voice brings sun to a dull day
It brings joy to my class
It also motivates and brings courage to people
My voice can be fearful at times
Also nice and calm
My voice is not ordinary

Anthony Cotton

The Complicated Facts of Life

My two sides of life are camouflaged.
My soul is complicated,
while I'm trying to reach my goals.
When I am painting a creation – a sense of my own imagination –
when I do this painting, I see the power in my eyes.
Other times I visualize and see myself again.
Sometimes I feel like I have a double,
or maybe a double shadow,
or someone is following me,
and I feel like night madness.

Monae Smith

My Sisters

My sisters, let's come together
and stand for our families.

My sisters, let's bring peace
to our world.

My sisters, let's not crowd
one another, let's care for one another.

My sisters, if you're scared,
don't be. Be strong.

My sisters, let's help each other,
and stand for world peace.

My sisters, my sisters, my better sisters,
we stand because we are free.

Antoinette Better

Sunflower Seeds

OPEN ME UP. Ranch, Cheese, BBQ, Honey

I can be any kind you want me to be.

Just OPEN ME UP.

OPEN ME, OPEN ME, OPEN ME

JUST OPEN ME ALREADY.

What's wrong with you, you know you want to.

All you have to do is OPEN ME UP AND TAKE ONE OUT

AND THAT'S ALL OR MAYBE EAT THE WHOLE BAG.

It's like Snap, Crackle, Pop, but instead
it's Crack, Crunch and Chew.

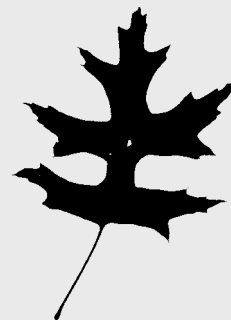
Read the back of the bag,
EAT, SPIT AND BE HAPPY.

Marché Shields

The Home of D.C.

A windy Monday
and the leaves blow off
the trees so quickly
with no sound,
you see people
fighting and hunting
you look without
a sound, you rush
to get in the house
before the sun goes down,
you see drugs on the ground
you don't make a sound,
you see people screaming
from somebody dying and
a lot of white, blue and red lights,
you put your hands over your ears
so you won't hear a sound.

Sade Taylor





Renita Williams

Big Sister

I always copy off my sister.
I want to be like her, even though
we are a year apart.
I love her pretty light brown skin.

What amazes me is how she can
hurt someone and not care about what she did.

I used to like wearing the same clothes as her,
talking like her, and really being like her.
But, now we are all grown up,
and my sister has already forgotten about the past.
Becoming a teen has broken us apart,
my big sister doesn't know how she tore up my heart.

Shaina Jones

All Hail Marché

I was born on the tip of a leaf
of a royal palm tree.
I walked to the top of Mount Everest
and yelled "All Hail Marché!"
and of course, everyone heard me.
I made the largest harp out of the strands of my hair.
When I smile, the sun shines even brighter.
I'm so magnificent, every star is named after who else, me.
I am so rich and powerful, I made the Great Wall of China,
and like I said before,
All Hail Marché.

Marché Shields

Split by two worlds

One whose world is filled with
sunlight, moonlight – natural stuff,
while one dreams of a city with industrial
city lights, streaking cars as they whiz by.
Another dreams of fish swimming by
like stars in the sky, as they carry out their adult lives.
Some day, both of these worlds will collide as one.
As the cars whiz by on the highway,
the bear will find his dinner split by two worlds.

Luqman Abdullah

Polluted Streets

A winter Monday, the city pouring with naked trees
and polluted rivers.
The night is dark, noisy and cold.
While sleeping the news comes and every night
someone's dead or injured.
Children turn into thugs, selling drugs.
I've seen life.
Bullets floating, boys getting jumped, girls getting raped,
corner stores getting trashed, filled with open bags of chips,
candy wrappers and other things I can't explain.
I can't change the city,
I don't think anyone can.

Marché Shields



If Fast Were a Color

If fast were a color,
it would not be as opinionated as blue.
It wouldn't be as careful like yellow.
Black is too sophisticated for its ruggedness.
Green and orange are too jolly, and
pink is too soft.
If fast were a color,
it would be red, as flawless,
as rugged as fast is.

Luqman Abdullah

Freedom

Fluorescent flowers flood the valley floors
falling freely like the moonlight,
or a bungee jump off the Empire State Building.
I can feel the rain like a nice hot shower,
and that is freedom.
Freedom smells like a fresh piña colada in Jamaica.
Freedom feels like a quiet rain forest nap.
Freedom looks like a new car design,
or the start of a new beginning.
It sounds like the ocean waves rocking back and forth.

Luqman Abdullah

Perfect

I am so perfect
I bring the sun to an end
and create a new one.
I am so amazing a cloud could
become my own planet.
I am so handsome my mirror shines
like fifteen million stars ready to burst.
I'm so great I have the powers
of the four elements – Earth, Water, Wind, and Fire.
I am as fragile as glass, but as tough
as a lion and an elephant.
To other people,
I am the mighty Sphinx.

My sharpness is so good,
when I look at a forest,
it cuts down into logs instantly.
My dreams are like nectar to my family,
when I dream, my family drinks.
In the blink of an eye, I dazzle everyone.
I am so perfect, I am like a jewel.

Steven Brown



*l-r: Steven Brown, Aaron Brooks, Renita Williams,
Nichell Kee, J.C. Morrow*

Forgotten Ones

I came from young to old
then from poor to rich
also from good to evil
lastly, from a young woman who's ugly
to an old woman who's pretty.

I am these things because of the people
who made me this way.
I am happy about the money, but not about everything else.
People threaten me like trash and in an instinctive way.
I should be equal.

I don't know why people treat me this way,
and I don't like it.
I want to be treated like an equal individual.
I hate being treated like scum or gum
on the bottom of someone's shoe.

Steven Brown

Another Monday

I sat at my altered desk,
thinking about a rainy memory.
Then I heard a sudden joy.
I saw a purple piano and a person
with velvet pants.
They had invisible candy.
Then I saw a dormant mouse.
I was sitting in the damp darkness
wearing an unlit cap.
I felt white and weathered.
Then I stepped out and was standing
at a drowsy station.
It was moonlit midnight.

Ashley Stevenson

Palm Tree

I like to touch palm fronds.
I jump like a basketball player to reach them,
sometimes knocking a coconut
to the ground, flying like wonder woman
as it hits the ground with a hard slap.
I climb the trunk full of diamonds
all the way to the top,
just to reach and touch the ground.
The coconuts have hairy and hard shells.

Ashley Stevenson

Meanings

I know the meaning of hate.
I have experienced madness when
I get into trouble.
I don't understand the meaning of makeup.
Sometimes I think I won't wake up,
but I thank God.
I understand the meaning of respect.
For years, I have known that my generation
is crazy and funny.
I know the meaning of rejoicing.
but I don't hope.

Cherish Gaines





l-r: Terrence Patterson, Steven Brown, James Tindle

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l-r: Shamá Better, Erica Kyle, Bruce Brown, Reginald Conway

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